

## Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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INFO COMUSMACT BKK TH

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CINCPAC/POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 17465

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, VS

SUBJ: RESISTANCE TO PRG AND REPORT OF ARREST OF  
AMERICANS IN SAIGON

1. SUMMARY. ON 17 AUGUST PRG AUTHORITIES IMPOSED A 24-HOUR CURFEW IN THE BIEN HOA REGION NEAR SAIGON FOLLOWING FIGHTING BETWEEN PRG AND UNIDENTIFIED ELEMENTS. SPORADIC FIGHTING IS REPORTED ALONG HIGHWAY 21 TO DALAT AND THE PRG HAS OFFERED A 20,000,000 PIASTER REWARD FOR THE DEATH OF "GENERAL PHONG" WHO MAY BE LEADING RESISTANCE ALONG ROUTE 21. IN EARLY AUGUST 52 AMERICANS WHO SURRENDERED TO PRG AUTHORITIES IN SAIGON CLAIMING TO BE DESERTERS WERE LATER ARRESTED AND ARE BEING HELD INCOMMUNICADO. A NEGRO AMERICAN WHO CLAIMED TO BE A COLONEL IN THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES WAS ARRESTED IN HATIEU IN MID-JUNE. A PRG OFFICIAL SAID HE WILL BE HELD AS A BARGAINING PAWN FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE USG, AS WILL OTHER AMERICANS BEING HELD IN HANOI. END SUMMARY.

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2. ON 20 AUGUST EMBOFF SPOKE WITH FORMER ARVN COL.

NGO TAN NGHIA, CURRENTLY A REFUGEE IN BANGKOK AWAITING TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES WHERE HE HAS ALREADY BEEN SPONSORED. NGHIA HAS MADE A POINT TO CONTACT RECENT ARRIVALS FROM SOUTH VIETNAM IN HOPES OF LEARNING OF THE FATE OF HIS WIFE IN SAIGON. HE SAID THAT ON 19 AUGUST HE SPOKE WITH MRS. NGUYEN THI TUYET LE, THE WIFE OF FRENCH CITIZEN LEONARD DE STABENRATH, AFTER HER ARRIVAL IN BANGKOK FROM SAIGON THAT DAY. MME. STABENRATH SAID THAT FRIENDS TRAVELLING INTO SAIGON FROM BIEN HOA TOLD HER THAT ON 17 AUGUST THERE WAS A FIREFIGHT BETWEEN PRG SOLDIERS AND UNIDENTIFIED MEN SHE SUSPECTED WERE FORMER GVN SOLDIERS. SHE SAID THAT A 24-HOUR CURFEW HAD BEEN IMPOSED ON BIEN HOA AND A 2200 CURFEW ON SAIGON.

3. MME. STABENRATH ALSO SAID THAT FORMER GVN UNITS WERE HARASSING TRAFFIC ALONG ROUTE 21 BETWEEN SAIGON AND DALAT AND THAT THE PRG HAD OFFERED A REWARD OF 20,000,000 PIASTERS FOR THE DEATH OF THE ANTI-PRG LEADER IN THAT AREA IDENTIFIED ONLY AS "GENERAL PHONG". COLONEL NGHIA OPINED THAT "PHONG" MAY BE HIS FORMER ASSOCIATE COLONEL VOUNG DANG PHONG WHO STAYED BEHIND IN SAIGON AFTER THE FALL OF THE GVN AND VOWED TO DIE FIGHTING THE PRG.

4. ON 20 AUGUST, MADAME TRAN THI MUI TOLD COLONEL NGHIA THAT IN EARLY AUGUST SHE WAS TOLD BY A MAN WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO THE ACTING PRG CHIEF OF POLICE OF SAIGON, COLONEL VO TAN THANH, THAT 52 AMERICAN CITIZENS CLAIMING TO BE US MILITARY DESERTERS HAD SURRENDERED TO COLONEL VO AND ASKED TO BE PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN SAIGON WITH THEIR VIETNAMESE FAMILIES. THE MEN WERE GIVEN 1,000 PIASTERS EACH BY GENERAL TRAN VAN TRA AND SENT HOME. WITHIN TEN DAYS ALL WERE ARRESTED AND HAVE SINCE BEEN HELD INCOMMUNICADO AT THE FORMER NATIONAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS. MADAME TRAN ARRIVED IN BANGKOK ON 16 AUGUST VIA VIENTIANE AFTER LEAVING SAIGON ON 12 AUGUST.

5. MADAME TRAN SAID THAT SHE WITNESSED THE ARREST  
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OF A NEGRO AMERICAN IN THE COASTAL TOWN OF HATIEN IN MID-JUNE AFTER THE AMERICAN ARRIVED IN VIETNAM BY BOAT FROM THAILAND. THE MAN, WHO CLAIMED HE RETURNED TO VIETNAM TO SEARCH FOR HIS VIETNAMESE WIFE, AND SAID HE WAS A COLONEL IN THE US ARMED FORCES, WAS IMMEDIATELY ARRESTED BY PRG AUTHORITIES AS A SPY. MADAME TRAN SAID THAT A PRG OFFICIAL TOLD HER THAT THE MAN WOULD BE HELD AS A BARGAINING CHIP BY THE

PRG FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.  
WITHOUT ELABORATING, HE SAID THAT THERE WERE OTHER  
AMERICANS IN HANOI WHO WOULD BE USED SIMILARLY.  
WHITEHOUSE

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